

Sector Connector

Push, pull and permeability

They say Australia is built on the back of migration. We're not alone of course. Humanity has been migrating from one place to another ever since it could walk that far.

Indigenous Australians migrated here tens of thousands of years ago, then a hiatus for about that long (with exceptions), and finally the Europeans came. Nothing's been quite the same since.

You can distil migration to two factors – push and pull.

Commonly, people migrate to escape circumstances, possibly war, persecution or poverty. This is the push. Others migrate because the grass looks greener, and often they have the wherewithal to migrate comfortably. This is a pull.

Before the rise of nationhood, the push and pull was in balance with nature. Climates came and went, and as populations grew humans moved around in sync. The main barrier was if others settled the new land first. You either fought it out, amalgamated or kept moving.

The days of unhindered migration, when push and pull was a response to environment, are long gone. We now live in a world of highly defined, protected and regulated borders.

This changed the nature of human migration entirely. Governments could regulate the push and pull with laws and various levels of security. They could adjust the permeability of their borders to suit preferences and policies. They could be selective.

In the age of borders, Australia's migration story began with British colonialists.

For breaking the law in the motherland, settlers were given



free passage to the new land. Those who survived incarceration became productive, many to be pastoralists and miners spreading civilisation across *Terra Nullis*.

Australia's immigration was predominantly Anglo-Saxon well into the 20th century, thanks to the White Australia Policy, an amalgam of laws regulating the border to



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favour the British. But the 1940s shook things up.

After the Second World War, there were limitless numbers of post-war Europeans looking for a new life, and Australia needed people. We relaxed our standards and got a shot in the cultural arm, so much that in a generation, Con the Fruiterer would seem more Aussie than Italian.

The world war also focused on one of Australia's greatest fears – the hordes to the north. Japan's part in the global chaos proved the point. There was a 'Yellow Peril' there; communism was on its way.

The Indochina wars, meant to halt the invasion, are history now and we are still a democracy, but they did generate another cultural infusion. To their credit, politicians accepted responsibility and welcomed refugees from those parts, bringing the Asian even deeper into our social fabric.

And now from more battlegrounds, we're experiencing another wave of migration. The Desi, the Middle Eastern and the Northern African are priming the country for another cultural evolution.

This potted history explored the push, pull and permeability that drives and regulates immigration. You'd have to conclude though that push factors are the strongest, and the displacement warfare creates is the strongest of all.

As hard as governments try to 'protect' their borders, and without world peace, the weight of numbers may well win out in the end. **N**